The five excuses for not upgrading Windows XP by Abney and Associates

IN exactly 16 days, one in 10 active Irish PCs will officially become virus magnets. On April 8, Microsoft cuts off its security support for [Windows XP](#), the operating system still used in 10.4 per cent of internet-connected PCs.
That means two things: (a) malware-makers will focus attention on Windows XP computers and (b) those who haven't bothered to upgrade to Windows 7 or Windows 8 will eventually get hit. Microsoft has been warning of this cut-off for five years. And yet thousands of Irish organizations — including banks and sensitive government departments — still have Windows XP.

I've been writing about this for 18 months. I've spoken to companies and semi-state bodies about why they haven't updated their machines, and a common thread has emerged.
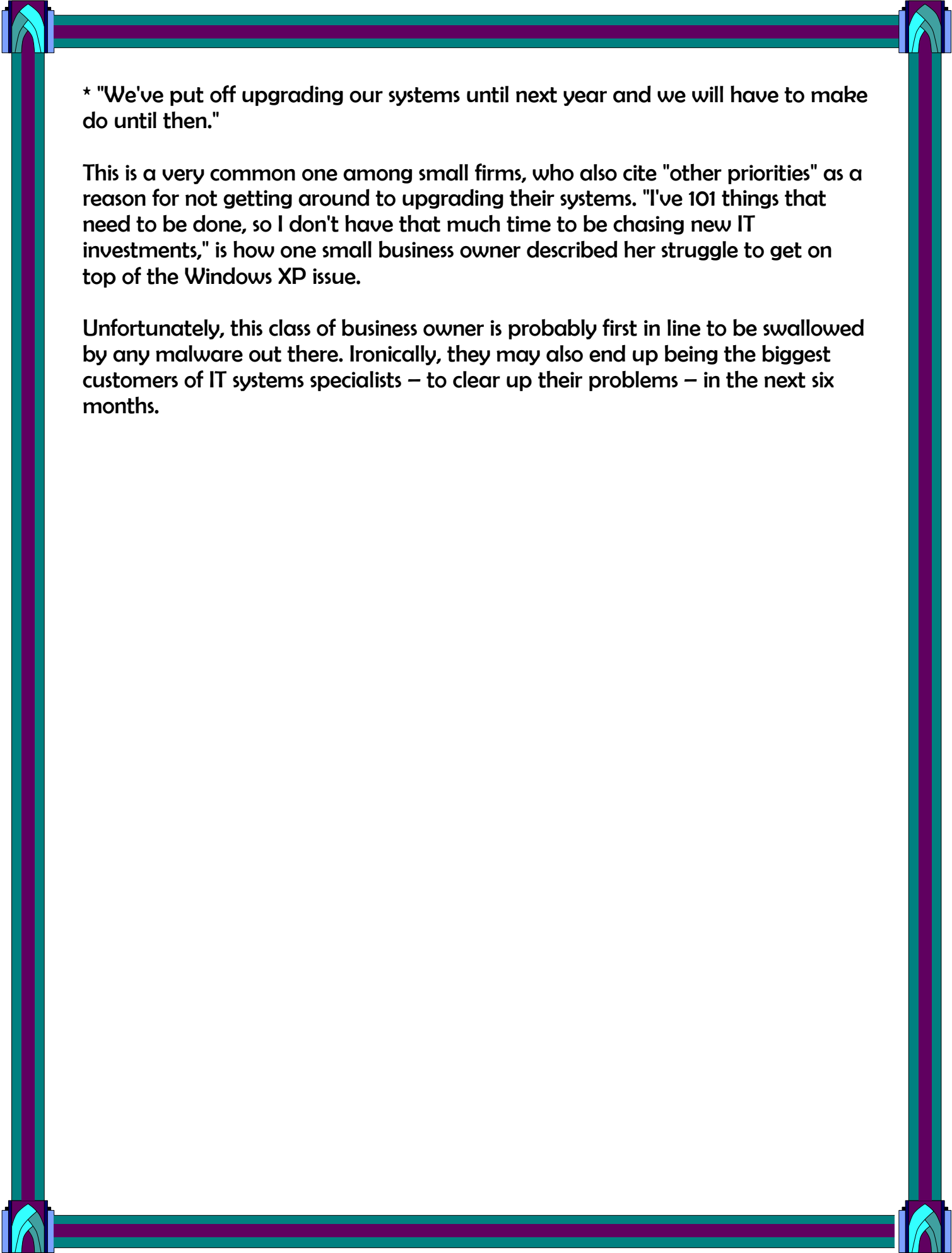
* "Ah, [Microsoft](#) will never adhere to that — ethyl back down."

This is one that I actually heard from the mouth of one of the most senior government IT managers. The theory was that if enough big organizations said they weren't switching over, Microsoft would have to relent and abandon the XP cut-off.

That gamble has backfired spectacularly, not least on the Government, which has now been forced to stump up an additional €3. em in IT security cover (from Microsoft) because various departments ' Windows XP machines haven't yet been upgraded.

* "It's not that simple — we have [software applications](#) that work with XP."

This is a genuine issue for any company or State body that had bespoke applications or software made for them. If you change the underlying operating system, some applications need to be completely overhauled, including a potentially lengthy re-testing phase. In other words, it could take time and money. But now it's going to need changing anyway. And all against a backdrop of heightened infection risks.

* "We've put off upgrading our systems until next year and we will have to make do until then."

This is a very common one among small firms, who also cite "other priorities" as a reason for not getting around to upgrading their systems. "I've 101 things that need to be done, so I don't have that much time to be chasing new IT investments," is how one small business owner described her struggle to get on top of the Windows XP issue.

Unfortunately, this class of business owner is probably first in line to be swallowed by any malware out there. Ironically, they may also end up being the biggest customers of IT systems specialists – to clear up their problems – in the next six months.